

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 183

By Camper

A RESOLUTION to commemorate Women's History Month by honoring all those female members to ever serve in the General Assembly.

WHEREAS, in his famous poem, *From Mother to Son*, Mr. Langston Hughes wrote:

Well son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair
It's had tacks in it
And splinters
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor-bare.
But all the time
I've been a-climbin' on
And reachin' landin's
And turnin' corners.
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now –
For I've still goin' honey,
I've still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair; and

WHEREAS, in the course of human events, the original thirteen colonies declared independence from Great Britain on July 4, 1776, and the United States of America was born; and

WHEREAS, in September 1787, a constitutional convention was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the United States Constitution was approved and sent to the States for ratification; and

WHEREAS, in 1789, the United States Constitution was ratified, with ten amendments now known as the Bill of Rights, by a majority of the States; and

WHEREAS, in 1796, Tennessee was granted statehood to become the sixteenth state of the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, in 1920, one hundred and twenty four years after Tennessee earned statehood, faithful, true and righteous Americans, as well as Tennesseans, fought for and then finally won the right to vote for women all across America; and

WHEREAS, in 1920, the historic and decisive vote granting American and Tennessee women the right to vote was cast in this chamber by the Honorable Representative Harry Burn; and

WHEREAS, between 1920 and 2010, approximately eighty-four women have served in the Tennessee General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, in 1922, the Honorable Marion Scudder Griffin became the first woman elected to the Tennessee General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, Representative Griffin was a female attorney who did not have the right to practice law in Tennessee because she was a woman; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee General Assembly changed the law to allow Representative Griffin the right to practice law, beginning a long tradition of leadership, service and women's legal reform in the Tennessee General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, in 1964, the Honorable Dr. Dorothy Brown became the first African-American woman elected to the Tennessee General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, in the 94th General Assembly, the Honorable Anna Belle O'Brien was the first woman to chair a committee in the history of the Tennessee General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, in January 1987, the Honorable Lois DeBerry became the first woman elected Speaker Pro Tempore of the Tennessee House of Representatives and set the record as the longest serving Speaker Pro Tempore in United States history, holding that post for twenty-four years; and

WHEREAS, in the 103rd General Assembly, the Honorable Kim McMillan became the first woman elected to the post of Majority Leader in the history of the Tennessee General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, our most recent history was made on January 11, 2011, when the Honorable Beth Harwell was elected the first woman Speaker of the Tennessee House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, these six pioneering women established the standard, and set the pace for all women who follow them; and

WHEREAS, with priceless passionate intensity, answering the call of conscience, and armed with their convictions, these public servants shaped the future, and are leading the great State of Tennessee today; and

WHEREAS, these women leaders established the Great Smoky Mountains National Park; fought corruption in government; have been champions for children and seniors; led the way in education, health care, business development, mental health, corrections, higher education and have otherwise lived up to the creed, "That if you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto me"; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and appropriate, especially during Women's History Month, that we take inventory of where we have been, where we are, and where we are going; and

WHEREAS, the names of women who served in the Tennessee General Assembly are recorded as we honor Women's History Month: Tommye Agee, Mary Anderson, Martha Ashe, Judy Barker, Mae Beavers, Sharon Bell, Diane Black, Marsha Blackburn, Kathryn Bowers, Henri Brooks, Dorothy Brown, Tommie Brown, Wilma Brown, Charlotte Burks, Jan Bushing, Sheila Butt, Karen Camper, Stephanie Chivers, Carol Chumney, Sandra Clark, Barbara Cooper, Norma Crow, Anne Davis, Betty Davis, Lois DeBerry, Francis Doyle, Maria Peroulas Draper, Shirley Duer, Mary Ann Eckles, Linda Elam, Joanne Favors, Gwen Fleming, Ophelia Ford, Sarah Frazier, Pamela Gaia, Brenda Gilmore, JoAnn Graves, Dolores Gresham, Marion Scudder Griffin, Thelma Harper, Beth Harwell, Joyce Hassell, Mabel Hughes, Julia Hurley, Sherry Jones, Peggy Knight, Rosalind Kurita, Edith Langster, Mildred Lashlee, Sally Love, Joan Lowe, Susan Lynn, Debra Maggart, Beverly Marrero, Kim McMillan, Lizze Lea Miller, Ruth Montgomery, Dana Moore, Anna Belle Clement O'Brien, Ruth Odell, Mae Owenby, Gwen Phillips, Mary Pruitt, Jeanne Richardson, Ruth Robinson, Carol Rice, Donna Rowland, Lillian Scott, Mary Merrill Shadow, Katherine Shook, Janis Sontany, Janice Springer, Joan Strong,

Maude Tucker Taylor, Edna Tullos, Brenda Turner, Johnnie Turner, Terri Weaver, Mary Wilder, Karen Williams, Margaret Wix, Robbie Wolfe, Jamie Woodson and Ann Worley; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that in honor of Women's History Month, that we hereby recognize, congratulate, and memorialize the women of the Tennessee General Assembly, both past and present, for their vision; their willingness to stand firm, and tall, while facing fearful odds; for their hard work; for their sincere commitment; for their diligence; for their dedication; for their willingness to build, lead and serve; for their devotion to duty; for their strength; for their intelligence; for their perseverance; for their sense of purpose; for their loyalty; for their integrity; for their true faith and ready hands; for their stout hearts; for having the indomitable fighting spirit of the valiant; and, finally, for having the supreme virtue, courage, which guarantees all their other virtues. Let the torch we carry today, burn brighter than yesterday, brighter tomorrow than today.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.